

egrets, Painted Storks, Asian Openbills, Black - headed Ibis and Eurasian Spoonbills can be visited by boat if the water level is sufficiently high, normally from mid - October to March. Tickets for boating can be obtained at Shanti Kutir ticket office. A metalled road run through the centre of the park from main entrance southwards to Keoladeo Temple and then south - west towards Agan Dam Chowkie. A number of licenced cycle - rickshaw drivers ply on this metallic road. For visitors in a hurry it would be ideal to go upto Keoladeo temple by cycle - rickshaw. There are two electric vans on hire.

Guides - Several "Naturalist guides" work freelance at Bharatpur with up-to-date knowledge of breeding sites, roosting owls, nightjars and where to find other specialities.

Bookshop - Conveniently placed inside the park where many attractive books on wildlife are available.

YOU ARE NOT A MERE VISITOR HERE

On you depends the security and warmth that wildlife seek here.

On you depends the beauty of this natural habitat.

Please abide by the **Park Ethics**.

- ★ Early mornings and later afternoons are best suited to visit the home of animals.
- ★ Guides are available at the entrance of the park. A guide knows the park well and can answer your countless unanswered queries. Carry home a memorable experience by engaging the services of a registered guide.
- ★ Animals have a right of way. If you come upon an animal crossing the road, resting or feeding by the road side, slow down. Watch the wild life at leisure.
- ★ Most animals have a keen sense of hearing and alien sounds startle them. Donot talk loudly. Control children. Small groups are ideal.
- ★ A forest has its own particular sounds. When in the forest, why listen to any other. Do not bring your transistors or cassette players with you.
- ★ Animals can look for their own food. Do not feed them yours.
- ★ While on excursions, avoid smoking. This wetland is vulnerable to fire, especially during spring and summer months. Negligence, however trifling, can cause a widespred fire.
- ★ Learn the art of camouflage from the animals. Blend with the surroundings by wearing colours that do not jar on the eye.
- ★ During summers, carry portable water with you on excursions.
- ★ Litter bins are provided along the roads. Do not throw litter around the park.
- ★ Do not swim in unfamiliar water.
- ★ Be careful during a boat ride. Don't do anything that can rock the boat. Don't bend to touch the water.
- ★ Carry a note book and park map. Travel light and do not carry any valuables except cameras and binoculars.
- ★ Keep a safe distance from the animals. Respect their privacy and you will be rewarded with hours of undisturbed viewing.

For further information contact

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A Park That Inspires Migrants The World Over.

KNP is renowned globally for being

- a place of halt and dispersal for migratory birds that winter in the Indian subcontinent.
- a refuge for several threatened species of birds, mammals, reptiles and insects.
- a home to several species of owls and birds of prey.
- the only wintering ground in India for Siberian Cranes (Central population)
- a protected area with very high biodiversity index.

History of KNP



Nature and history have joined hands over 250 years to make Keoladeo National Park. This natural depression was flooded after the Ajan bund (west of the park) was constructed between 1726-1763 by Maharaja Suraj Mal, the then ruler of the princely state of Bharatpur, at the confluence of two rivers Gambhir and Banganga. The inundation resulted in production of a lot of aquatic vegetation which attracted a very large number of migratory birds. Marshes of Bharatpur were developed as a duck shooting reserve. The artificially created duckshoot reserve was formally inaugurated by the then Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon when a duck shoot was organised in his honour on 2nd December, 1902. A shooting party headed by the then Viceroy of India, Lord Linlithgow shot a maximum of 4,273 birds on 12th November, 1938 as shown in shooting record inscribed on the pillar near Keoladeo temple. Keoladeo Ghana was **notified as a bird sanctuary in 1956**. Hunting rights remained with the Maharaja of Bharatpur, his guests, and a few state guests till 1965. Between 1977 and 1981 a masonry wall was constructed all around the park. Keoladeo Ghana was declared as a **Ramsar site** in 1981 under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance. In 1982 Keoladeo Ghana Sanctuary was **upgraded to a National Park**. In 1985 the park was declared as a **World Heritage site** under the World Heritage Site Convention. It is named after Keoladeo (shiva) temple located in the centre of the park. It was earlier known as "Ghana," meaning dense forest. With a wide diversity of habitats ranging from marshes, woodlands, scrublands, grasslands to denuded saline patches, the park supports an amazing variety of plant and animal species.

THE MANY SPLENDoured SEASONS.

On account of the dynamics of the wetland system with its seasonal cyclical changes, the Keoladeo habitat is fascinating at any time of the year. It is popularly known as the bird paradise. Over 375 bird species have been recorded in the park. Keoladeo National Park has three major seasons - the rainy, the cold and the hot.

During monsoon, water is released into the park through a canal (Ghana canal) from the Ajan Bund, a temporary reservoir constructed some 250 years ago. The water brings with it lifeforms at various trophic levels, making the reserve reverberate with activity. Aestivating turtles resume normal life by June - July; several seedlings, tuberous / rhizomatous plants germinate, while most heronry species commence nesting, as do resident ducks, moorhens, jacanas, white breasted waterhens, sarus cranes, herons, darters and storks. The park has one of the **world's most spectacular heronry**. Islets with clumps of acacias are home to large breeding colonies of waterbirds. During the post-monsoon

and early winter periods the park resounds with the cacophony of the voracious chicks of piscivorous birds. As the nesting of the herons, cormorants and storks progresses, the number and variety of birds of prey increases. If there is a delay in monsoon, birds are known to abandon their breeding attempts for the year. Come September, and the migratory waterfowls begin to arrive **for wintering**. During winter, Park has the maximum bird population. Congregations of thousands of migratory and resident birds with juveniles make it a marvellous site. More than 20 species of duck have been seen in Bharatpur, with common winter visitors such as Ruddy Shelduck, Northern Pintails, Common Teal, Eurasian Wigeon, Garganey, Northern Shoveller alongside resident Lesser Whistling Teals and Spot-Billed Duck. Painted storks feeding their young ones or shielding its young from sun by spreading its wings is a common sight. Indian Rock Pythons can be found sunning themselves at midday or curled up beneath a bush. Migratory birds start returning to their breeding grounds in February. By March-April, most long distance migratory birds have left, leaving the residents and local migrants to congregate at the gradually receding waters. Resident woodland birds start nesting at the onset of **spring**.

The scorching **summer** sun dries up the park by May-June, leaving only a few pools in the deeper areas. These pools in which tons of fish survive, attract flocks of a variety of piscivorous birds. They also provide refuge to many turtles, while others aestivate in the drier parts. As the pools dry up, scavengers feast on the dead and dying fish, leaving the rest to decompose. Congregation of Sarus Cranes can be easily seen in the shallow pools. The summer advances, changing the pools to bake mud and the upland tracks into dry grasslands, with trees providing shelter to the resident fauna. With the onset of the monsoon, the park teems with life once more and the whole cycle repeats itself. A variety of interesting situations are thus encountered with the changing seasons.

PARK STATISTICS

Area - 29 sq km (about 2,873 hectares)
Wetland area - 8.5 to 11 sq km.
Altitude - 174 m (average)
Average annual rainfall - 662 mm over a period of 60 days.
Temperature - Maximum 49 degree C; Minimum 2 to 3 degree C.



BIODIVERSITY

The subtropical climate of Keoladeo and the variety of habitats ranging from upland terrestrial to submerged aquatic, the dynamics of the wetland system and its strategic geographic location on the flyway of migratory birds all contribute to the diversity of life forms it supports.

HABITATS



One third of the habitat is wetland with varying types of micro habitats having trees, mounds, dykes and open water with or without submerged or emergent plants. The uplands have grasslands (savannas) of tall species of grass together with scattered trees and shrubs present in varying density. A similar habitat with short grasses, such as *Cynodon dactylon* and *Dicanthium annulatum* also exists. Woodlands with thickets and thickets with

huge Kadam trees (*Mitragyna parvifolia*) are distributed in scattered pockets.

VEGETATION

The richness and diversity of plant life inside this small park is remarkable. The park's flora consists of 379 species of flowering plants of which 96 species are wetland species.

MICROFLORA AND FAUNA

The wetland of the park is very rich in microscopic life-forms such as algae, fungi and zooplankton which change with the seasons and varying ecoclimatic conditions.

INVERTEBRATES

Macro invertebrates such as worms, insects and molluscs, though more abundant in variety and numbers than any other group of organisms, are present mostly in terrestrial habitats. They are food for many fish and bird, as well as some animal species, and hence, constitute a major link in the foodchain and functioning of the ecosystem. Aquatic insects include mainly bugs, beetles, striders, swimmers, chironomid larvae, and nymphs of dragon flies and damsel flies. Land insects are in abundance and have a positive affect on the breeding of land birds.

FISH

The fish fauna of the park comprises 43 species, of which 37 enter the park along with the water from rivers, and six species are breeding residents. During a good rainy season the park receives a maximum of 65 million fish fry and fingerlings.

AMPHIBIANS AND REPTILES

The herpetofauna of Keoladeo National Park is very rich. The whole of Rajasthan state has only ten species of turtles while this small park has seven species. Besides this, there are five lizards, thirteen snake species and seven species of amphibians. The bull frog (*Rana tigrina*) and Skipper frog (*Rana cyanophylctis*) are commonly found in the wetland. It is very easy to see a python basking in the sun outside its burrow on a sunny winter day. Most of the python burrows are mainly with in the terrestrial area, particularly in party saline areas. The python feeds on birds, small mammals or even upon fawns of chital. The Common Monitor lizard, Indian Porcupine (*Hystrix indica*) and Bicoloured Leaf-nosed Bat (*Hipposideros*) have been seen in the same burrow as that of Python. The poisonous snakes found in the park are krait, cobra and Russel's viper. The checkered keelback water snake (*Xenochropis piscator*) is very common and is fed upon by herons, storks and the sarus cranes. The common Indian monitor (*Varanus bengalensis*) preys upon eggs of birds and pythons.

All seven species of turtles are aquatic, although the dominant species, the Indian falp-shell (*Lissemys punctata*) moves on to drier areas for aestivation. The sight of a turtle upside down, being torn from its shell by a scavenger vulture in the dry marsh, is quite common in the summer. The brahminy river terrapin (*Geochlemys hamiltoni*) and peacock softshell (*Trionyx hurum*) are records to Rajasthan.

BIRDS

Keoladeo National Park is popularly known as "bird paradise". Over 375 bird species have been recorded in the park.

Ornithologically, the park assumes significance in two respects - One because of its strategic location, it is a staging ground for migratory waterfowl arriving in the Indian subcontinent before dispersing to various regions. It is also a site where waterfowl converge before departing to breeding grounds in western Palearctic region. In addition, the wetland is a wintering area for massive congregations of waterfowl. Two, it has been the only regular wintering area in India for the central population of the rare and endangered Siberian crane.

MAMMALS

Mammals fauna of the park is equally rich with 27 identified species. Of the six species of large herbivores, nilgai, ferral cattle and chital are abundant while blackbuck and sambar are few. Wild boar and porcupine, sometime sneak out of the park to raid crop fields.

Two species of mongoose, the small Indian mongoose and the common mongoose are occasionally found. Two lesser cats of genus *Felis* (the jungle cat and fishing cat) and two civets (common palm civet and small Indian civet) are rare inside the park. The smooth Indian otter can be seen attacking birds such as coots and at times crossing the woodlands.

There is no mammalian predator inside the park. The last leopard was killed in 1965. A lone leopard seen from September 1987 to May 1988 inside the park fed mainly on cattle and wild boar. Jackals have taken up the role of predators and feed on birds and rodents.

Hyaenas are rarely sighted inside the park. There are many species of rats, mice, gerbills and bats.

VISIT TO K.N.P.

- ★ July to September - Maximum local migratory birds. Nesting and breeding season.
- ★ October to February - Best season for watching migratory birds.
- ★ March to June - Nesting and breeding of resident birds. Good season to listen to clear bird calls.
- ★ Location - 2 km South East of Bharatpur. Bharatpur is 180 km South of New Delhi and 50 km West of Agra.
- ★ Nearest Railway Station - Bharatpur
- ★ Nearest Airport - Agra

FACILITIES

Accommodation - A Forest Lodge run by the Ashoka Group (ITDC) and a Forest Rest House at Shanti Kutir are located inside the park. The Rajasthan Tourism Development Corporation runs a Saras Tourism Bungalow and is located 500 meters from the main gate. In addition to this a number of private hotels run by private owners are available outside the Park.

Transport - Private vehicles are only allowed as far as Forest Lodge and Shanti Kutir. An excellent network of tracks cover the reserve. Many run along acacia - lined bunds between wheels and can be explored on food or by hired bicycles from the main ticket office. The heronry with breeding cormorants, Oriental darters,

